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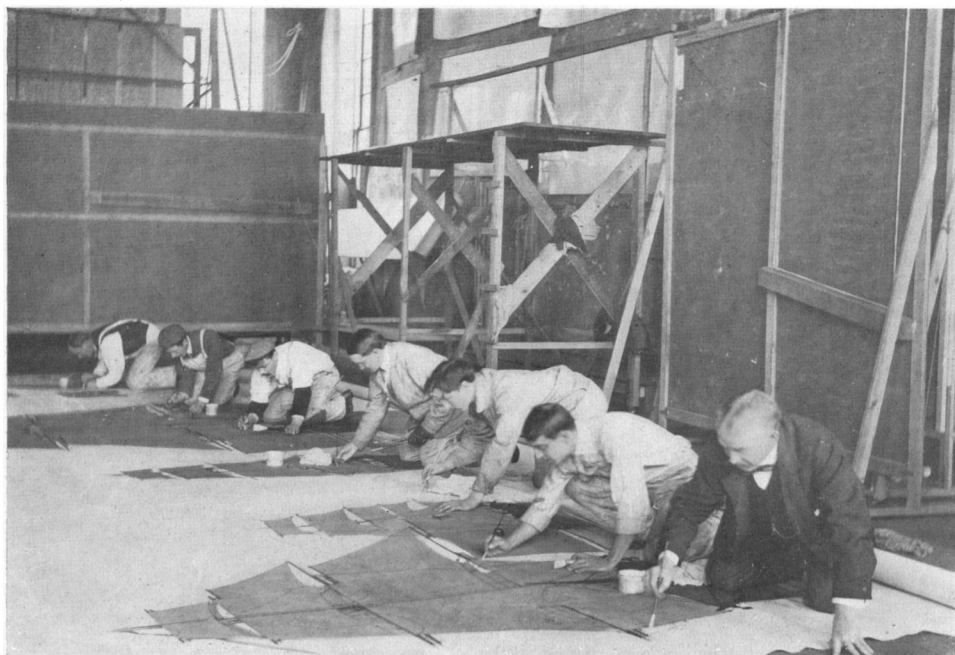
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MR. MILLET AND HIS ASSISTANTS AT WORK UPON THE CEILING DECORATION FOR THE
BALTIMORE CUSTOM HOUSE

MILLET AT WORK

A CHRONICLE OF FRIENDSHIP

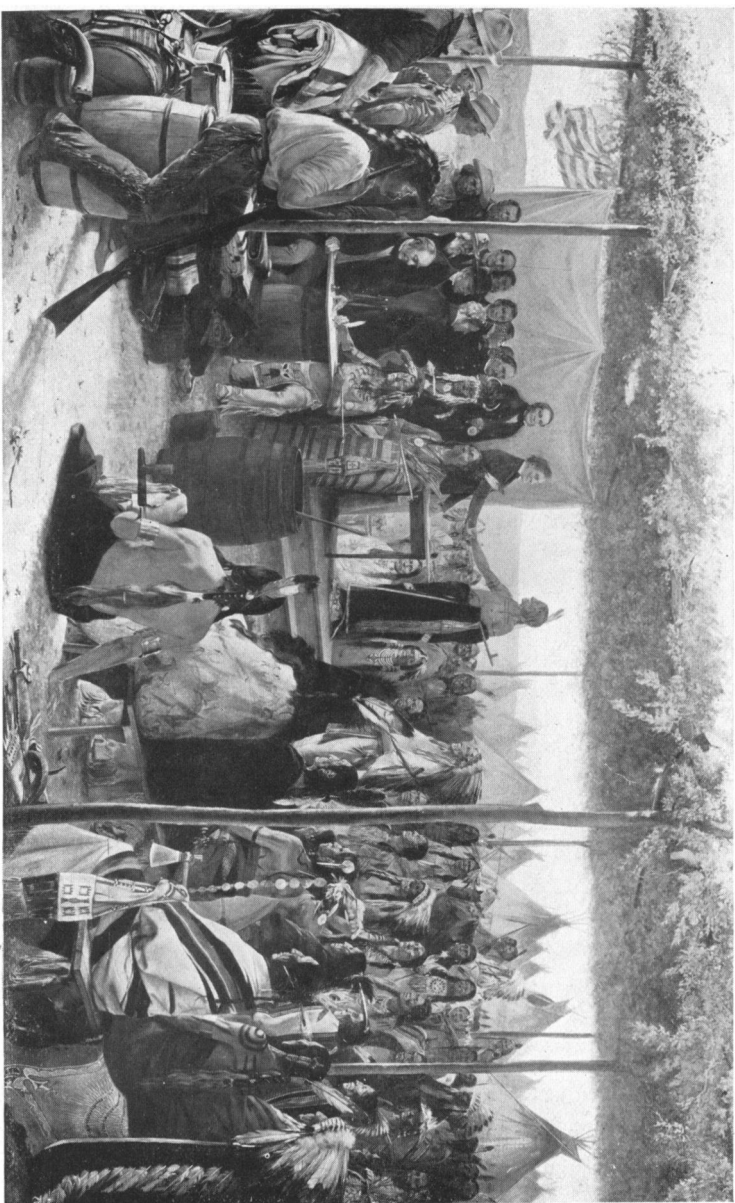
BY JAMES HUNT

PART II—AFTER THE WORLD'S FAIR

SHORTLY after the Chicago Fair Mr. Millet went to England, where he remained four or five years. We corresponded and kept in close touch with one another. In 1898 he went to Manila as correspondent in the Spanish-American War for *Harper's Weekly* and the *London Times*. I saw him at brief intervals; after the Philippines he went to Paris to decorate the American pavilion at the Paris Exposition of 1900; then back to England and to the United States to resume his mural work; while engaged upon his masterpiece for the Baltimore Custom House, I was constantly in communication with him; I was intensely interested in ships and shipping, and he knew it. When the

work was completed and hung he wrote me. I made up my mind to visit him in Washington and go on to Baltimore to see the work. On May 29, 1910, I met Mr. Millet at the Cosmos Club, and he went on to Baltimore with me and gave me that whole day. I thought I had some conception of the work from small photographs and letters I had received from him. But I shall never forget the impression as I stood surveying my surroundings and examining as closely as I could with the critical knowledge of a sailor.

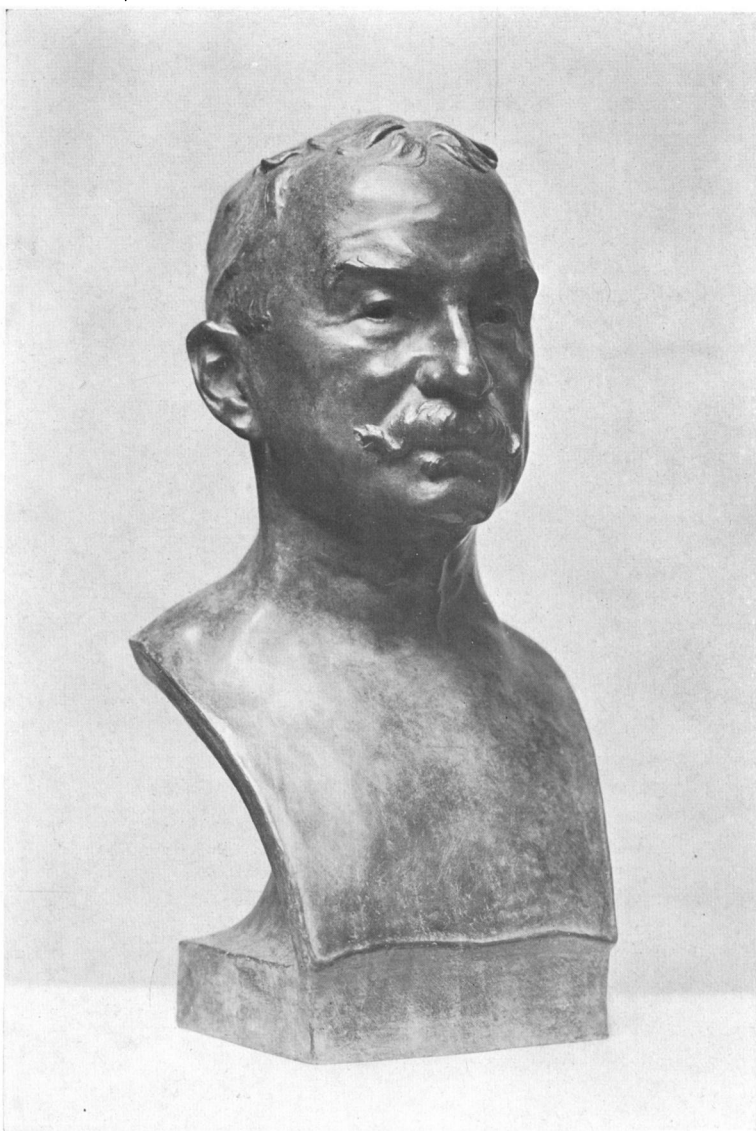
Go you sages of the sea—man-of-war's men, merchantmen, fishermen, whalers and coasters; take your marine glasses with you, and as you enter the "Call



THE TREATY OF THE TRAVERSE DE SIOUX

MINNESOTA STATE CAPITOL, ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

F. D. MILLET



PORTRAIT BUST OF F. D. MILLET. MODELLED WHEN HE WAS LAST IN ROME, BY ALBIN POLASEK, OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY AT ROME

room" look at that beautiful ceiling—the ten vessels making port on a hazy morning of summer sunshine. Examine the sails, rigging, every clew-line, bunt-line, spilling-line, leach-line, tack and sheet; see the anchors on the bow ready to let go. Now cast your eyes around and look at that beautiful picture of the clipper-ship *Empress of the Sea* with

her port tacks aboard, stun-sails on both sides, weather clew of main-sail hauled up, crojack furled, fore and aft stay-sails all drawing, yards trimmed and braces hauled taut—everything that goes to show a masterpiece of seamanship! Look again, and see Donald McKay's greatest ship, the *Great Republic*, with her port tacks aboard showing the

weather view, with every shroud-stay, backstay, halyards and downhauls showing, and sheets hauled out to the sheave-hold; she looks as if she were sailing in the very eye of the wind! Examine her from truck to deck, from flying jib-boom to taffrail, and find if you can a rope yard out of place.

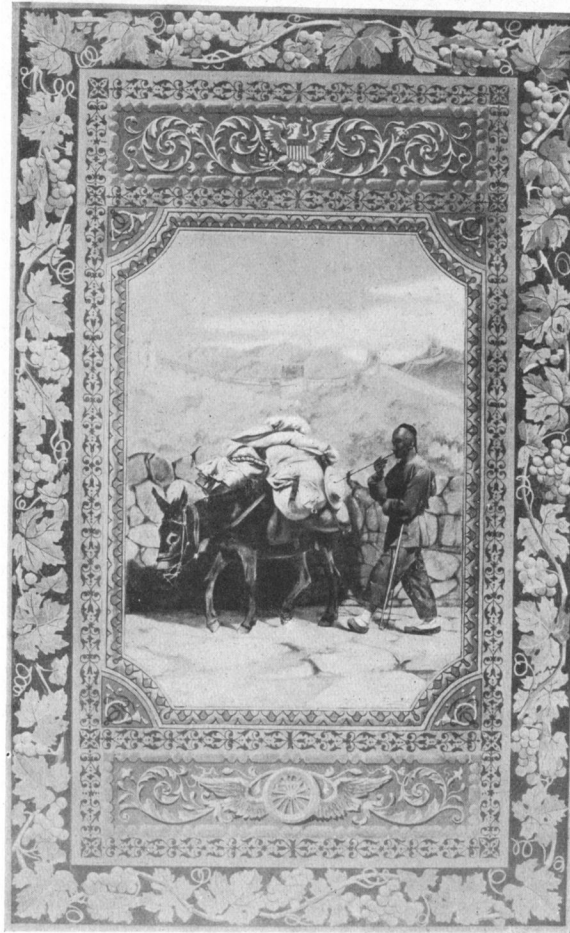
What sailor who has sailed from port to port has not at some time, making land on a hazy morning, beheld such a scene as this: vessels popping out all around him, yards checked in in different ways just as the wind strikes them, every eye looking for land with the glad smile that is characteristic of the homeward-bounder all over the world?

July 9, 1911, I left Chicago for the East with the intention of seeing as many of Mr. Millet's mural decorations as I could. My first stop was at Cleveland to see the decorations in the Cleveland Trust Company's Savings Bank. As I entered the rotunda and looked up at those thirteen beautiful panels portraying the development of civilization in America I wondered how he could do such an enormous amount of work. But later, after leaving the bank, and upon visiting the postmaster's room in the Federal Building, where I saw on the frieze the thirty-five panels representing the many methods of transporting mail throughout the world, the difficult angles he had to fill out and the whole thing so beautifully done, the things he accomplished really seemed marvelous to me. From Cleveland I went to Albany, New York, to see the ceiling decoration he painted for the New York State Building at the World's Fair. This painting was taken to the Capitol at Albany after the Fair closed. There it was, hanging on the staircase wall, and it seemed to be in as good condition as when painted eighteen years before. I went from Albany to Boston to see the work in Trinity Church which he had done while chief assistant to John LaFarge many years before; from Boston to New York, and then on to Newark, New Jersey, to see the painting in the Grand Jury room of the Essex County Court House, "The

Foreman of the Grand Jury Rebuking the Chief Justice of New Jersey." In Washington I went direct to Mr. Millet's studio in old Forest Hall. He was working on two very large decorations for the Hudson County, New Jersey, Court House at Jersey City. I stayed with him but a few minutes, as I wanted to make a train for Baltimore to see the decorations in the Custom House once again. I arrived back in Washington in the evening and spent the night with Mr. Millet at the home of Major Butt, with whom the artist was living. I saw there the portrait of the Major which Mr. Millet had painted for him. I spent all the next day in his studio watching him at work on those great pictures, and I wondered if he ever got tired; up and down on that eighteen-foot traveling scaffold painting, and singing as he painted, only stopping at noon for a light lunch. I had put on overalls and was doing a little work around the studio for him. He turned from his canvas and said, "Jim, it seems natural to see you around again." He worked from seven-thirty in the morning until five-thirty in the evening; on our way home I asked: "Mr. Millet, don't you feel tired after going up and down that scaffolding so many times?" He answered, "No, I think it does me good." After supper he went with me to the Union Station and bade me good-bye, saying, "Well, Jim, you have had a real vacation and I enjoyed your visit immensely." How little I thought it was the last I was to see of him! I went from Washington to Pittsburgh. His decoration in the Bank of Pittsburgh, the "Thesmophoria," I was fortunate enough to see under very favorable conditions; the sunlight coming through the glass roof and striking directly on it showed a beautiful picture, indeed. I had been only a few weeks back in Chicago when I received a letter from him saying he was going over to England to stay for awhile and then to Spain for a short holiday. Some business delayed him and he did not leave until fall. I wrote him at New York and my letter was forwarded to Rome, whence he had gone

because of urgent business of the Academy. He sent me a postal at Christmas and a letter from the steamship *Santa Anna*, dated January 20, 1912, latitude 39.27 north, longitude 52.24 west—only one degree and thirty-nine miles of latitude and two degrees and

I was in Rome, from October 29th to January 8th, that all I had time to do was to send you a post card. About Christmas time I went across the water intending to stay a month or so in England and then have a brief holiday in Spain after a few days in Rome, whither

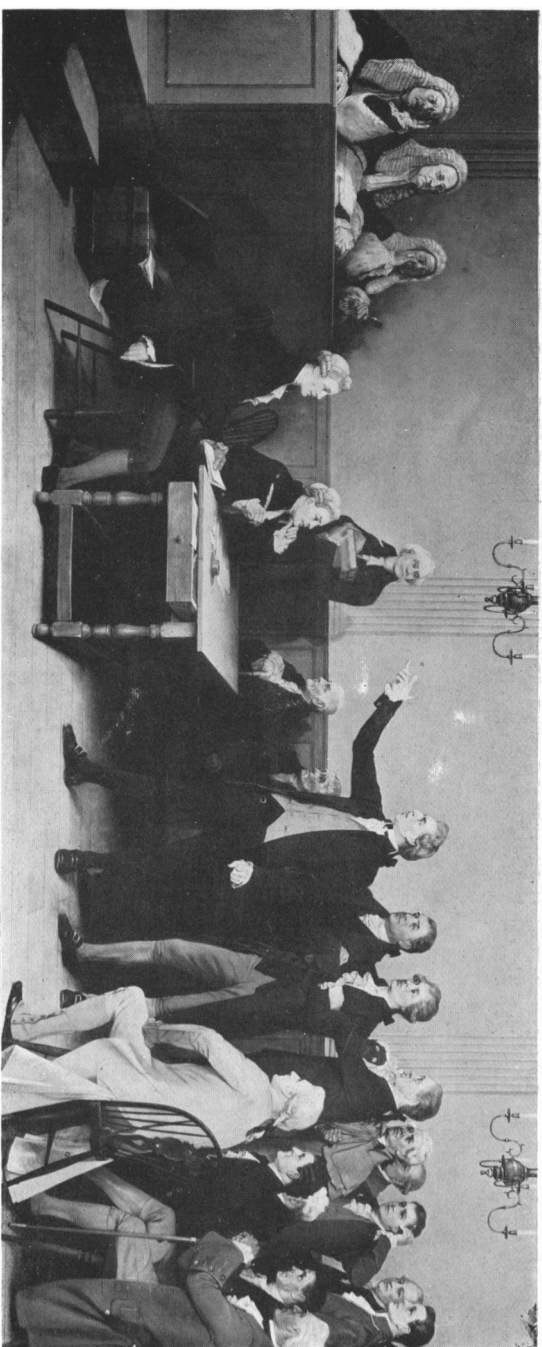


DECORATION BY F. D. MILLET IN POSTMASTER'S ROOM
CLEVELAND

ten minutes of longitude from where the *Titanic* went down. He was on his way back to the United States, and I quote a part of his letter which deals with his appointment as director of the joint schools of the American Academy in Rome, and this quotation will show the unselfishness of the man.

"I was so busy during the two months

I had agreed to go at the request of the Executive Committee. I found myself obliged to take over the Villa Aurelia, make an inventory of over two thousand pieces of furniture, do all sorts of repairs, start improvements—bath rooms, electric lights, heating, etc., etc., and in the middle of it take still another villa and garden, a large plot of land which



REPORTING THE CHIEF JUSTICE

ESSEX COUNTY COURT HOUSE, N. J.

F. D. MILLET

was purchased for the Academy by Mr. Morgan; then came along the plans of the new buildings to be erected on the new land, the engagement of an architect to make working drawings and the negotiations to sell the Villa Mirafiore, where our school now is, and then the installation of the Director who had been sent over in Mr. Crowninshield's place. This sounds like something of a program for two months, but I haven't told half of it, and indeed couldn't tell half without writing a column. In the middle of my work which kept me busy day and night, so busy, in fact, that I got to the Exhibition only a couple of hours and did not get to see a single museum or yet a church—not even St. Peter's—I had various letters and cablegrams from the Executive Committee to have the appointment of Head Director for both schools settled. Well, to make a long story short, I finally cabled in reply to a dispatch saying the Executive Committee unanimously requested me to take the place, that if Mrs. Millet agreed I would accept. They cabled me at once 'Madam consents,' and that's where it stands now. I can't plan anything because I do not know what will be expected of me. Probably two years will pass in building and installing the joint schools on the hill; after that I should think four or five months each year will be enough for me to be there, and during the building, much less. But all is 'in the air' thus far. Indeed I don't see how I can possibly do it, and yet I must do it for the Academy, that has been so long McKim's and my chief thought. Time will probably straighten it all out; meanwhile, I shall go on working. We are having an exceedingly rough voyage; the worst I have experienced in years. Quarter speed part of the time with a swing two or three hundred miles to the southward to get out of the tremendous rough seas, which began to break everything. We left Naples on the ninth and shall not get to New York, I fancy, before the twenty-third or twenty-fourth. I have been working all the time over my report, accounts and correspondence, and shall barely finish my work before we

land. All this does not seem much like a holiday, does it?"

I wish to mention a letter dated September 23, 1895, which he wrote to me from Dublin, Ireland, where I was born, asking for the address of my people. He stated that he was going back to England for a short while, but would return to Dublin before long and would call to see them. I sent him the address, and in a letter I received from my sister later she told me about his calling. She said: "He came to the door, knocked and walked in, shook hands with father and mother and said, 'I came from Chicago, from your son Jim, to tell you how he is getting along.' He sat down between father and mother and talked to them for an hour, telling them all about you and your work on the Fair. It made their hearts feel glad to hear what he said about you." I had not seen them for twenty years. This to me portrays the fine character of the man better than anything else—when one whose time is so valuable as was his would go out of his way to do an act of this kind.

In the twenty years I had known him he had written me sixty-seven letters and postals from all parts, and at Christmas time I was sure of a kindly greeting from him. When he came to Chicago he would telegraph me to meet him at the train. He gave me his books to read and photos of his pictures; also an original sketch of a battle in the Balkans in the Russo-Turkish War. He taught me to love books and read them as I had never read before, in this way helping me to get so much more out of life. And this was the Mr. Millet I knew and loved so well—the dear friend I have lost. As I stood at his grave in the little cemetery in that old New England town of East Bridgewater, I felt that he must know that I was there.

"He will not be forgotten so long as we live who knew him and loved him, and for all time, in whatever of nobility and beauty there may be in American life and character, there will remain something of the spirit and service of Francis Millet."

—*Elihu Root.*